

**ADOT Multimodal Planning Division
Planning Assistance for Rural Areas (PARA) Program
Frequently Asked Questions**

PLANNING STUDY APPLICATIONS

Q. Who is eligible to receive PARA program funds?

A. Funding is available to local communities, cities, towns, and counties located outside Transportation Management Areas (Phoenix and Tucson urbanized boundaries); and Tribal governments and their sub-units are eligible including: chapters, districts and villages.

Q. Is local match required to receive PARA funding?

A. The PARA program is funded 100% by ADOT using Federal Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) funds; therefore no local match is required.

Q. Will ADOT provide additional planning assistance beyond the PARA scope after the study is initiated?

A. The awarded funding is a limit or cap of \$250,000 for each PARA study process. Additional funds may be provided in special circumstances. This is dependent upon the specific circumstance, funding availability, and ADOT approval.

Q. If my local jurisdiction has received Small Area Transportation Study (SATS) or PARA funding in the past may we submit an application for funding?

A. Local jurisdictions awarded projects in the past are eligible to submit applications; however, it is important to note the selection process is competitive.

Q. May my community partner with other communities when applying for the PARA program?

Partnerships between communities are encouraged. A lead agency and associated contact must be identified for project management purposes.

Q. May consultants assist with preparation of PARA project applications?

A. Private consultants should not assist with the development and completion of PARA program project applications. Firms assisting with applications will be ineligible to propose on projects due to potential conflicts of interest. Also, local jurisdictions receiving assistance from consultants will be ineligible for PARA program funding.

Q. May PARA funds be used for staff salaries?

A. PARA funds may not be used for staff salaries.

Q. What transportation issues may be addressed by PARA program funding?

A. Addresses issues related to roadway, transit, and non-motorized transportation modes including the following activities:

- Roadway operations and facilities planning;
- Transit operations and facilities planning;
- Feasibility review of public transit with intent of seeking FTA or other funding assistance;
- General Plan Circulation Element development / update;
- Bike / Ped Planning including General Plan Bicycle elements; and
- Trails Planning as part of a multimodal roadway, pedestrian and transit system.

Q. What activities are not eligible for PARA funding?

A. The following activities are not eligible for funding;

- Design documents
- Environmental clearances (NEPA documents);
- Engineering documents including pre-design and DCRs; and
- Construction of facilities or capital expenses including: staff salaries, and purchasing computer hardware.

Q. What types of Planning Studies are considered under PARA?

A. At least one of the below MAP-21 Planning Elements/Performance Goals must be identified for the study to be considered eligible:

- Safety;
- Infrastructure condition;
- Congestion reduction;
- System reliability;
- Freight movement and economic vitality;
- Environmental sustainability; and/or
- Reduced project delivery delays.

Q. I understand money is also available for transit feasibility review work from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding managed by ADOT MPD. How is this funding different from the PARA program?

A. If a jurisdiction is interested in conducting a transit feasibility review, the jurisdiction should coordinate this request with the MPO or COG and Teri Kennedy, ADOT MPD (tkennedy@azdot.gov). There is not a significant difference in planning assistance between the PARA program and FTA planning assistance. One noted difference for the PARA program may be added integration among transportation modes. The PARA program is 100% subsidized using State Planning and Research (SPR) funding, while the FTA sections 5303 and 5304 programs include a 20% local match requirement to support the transit planning study.

Q. May the PARA program be used to conduct a recreational trails study?

A. The PARA program is intended for the study of rural transportation systems. This type of study would be eligible if the trail network provides linkages to other transportation systems, e.g. local roadway network, transit services, bicycle routes, etc.

Q. May the PARA program be used for flood and waterway planning?

A. This is not an eligible activity within the PARA program. A suggested source for assistance may be the County, Flood Control District, or Arizona Department of Water Resources.

Q. Are homeowners associations eligible to apply for PARA funding?

A. Homeowners associations are not eligible for PARA funding. The association is a corporation formed by a home developer with the charge of managing and marketing of homes and land. Views of homeowners associations may not reflect the views of the community as a whole.

Q. What are my responsibilities as a local public agency project contact?

A. The lead local public agency project contact will be responsible for the following:

- Assisting ADOT PM as part of the Study team;
- Assisting with development of public involvement materials used in related activities (e.g. public meetings, forums and stakeholder meetings);
- Providing guidance and local perspective, including timely review and final approval of all deliverables; and
- Assist with securing meeting rooms for project meetings (e.g. public meetings, TAC meetings, PMT meetings).

Q. What is ADOT's role related to management of a PARA study?

A. ADOT Project Manager responsibilities include:

- Overall project management
- Consultant selection oversight
- Scheduling TAC meetings
- Deliverables review and acceptance; and
- Payment for consultant services.

Q. What areas should be emphasized in a PARA program application?

A. The most important section of the PARA application carrying the most scoring process weight is the Background, Purpose, Need and Goals Statement which should include a strong discussion of the following:

- Overall project considerations
- Demonstration of need for the Study;
- Demonstration of planning element incorporation.

Q. What are the application submittal requirements?

A. Submittal requirements:

- Submitted to ADOT no later than 4 p.m. on Monday, March 30, 2015;
- Late or incomplete applications will not be considered; and
- Send all required items (less than 12MB) via Email to: DGabiou@azdot.gov

Q. When is funding available?

A. 2015-2016 PARA cycle funding will be available sometime in the late summer to early fall of 2016.

Q. Who is on the PARA application selection committee and will local agencies be involved with the process?

A. The selection committee will be made up of ADOT MPD PARA project managers assigned to various MPO and COG regions throughout the State. Within a few weeks after expiration of the application submittal period, a meeting will be held to select projects, and local jurisdiction contacts will be notified shortly after conclusion of the meeting.

Q. What parameters will PARA program applications be scored against and what is the weight of each?

A. Applications will be scored against the following criteria:

- Overall Project Considerations: 0-20 Points
- Demonstration of Need for Study: 0-25 Points
- Incorporation of MAP-21 Planning Elements/Performance Goals: 0-15 Points
- Demonstration of Community Support: 0-15 Points
- Benefits the State, Region, and / or Community: 0-25 Points

Q. Who is on the project consultant selection committee and what level of involvement will my local jurisdiction have with selecting a project consultant?

A. The project consultant will be selected by a committee composed of ADOT MPD PARA program project managers assigned to various MPO and COG regions throughout the State. The ADOT MPD project manager assigned to your project will call in advance of selection to solicit thoughts on consultants who have proposed on your project, however, local jurisdictions will not be involved in the selection meeting.

PRE-SCOPING PROJECTS

Q. What types of projects qualify for the Pre-Scoping process?

A. If a transportation need is identified, but you are unsure how much the project would cost, how long the design would take, or what the full scope of work should be, the Pre-Scoping process would help your project. Examples of applicable projects could include (but are not limited to):

- pavement preservation,
- bridge rehabilitation/construction,
- shared-use paths,
- transportation facility enhancement, new roadway, transportation facility construction (port-of-entry, rest stop, park and ride, etc.),
- ADA upgrade, and more.

Q. How does the Pre-Scoping process work?

A. The Pre-Scoping process basically allows you to complete the 1st one-to-two months of project design effort upfront. Refer to Appendix C (page 8) of the PARA Application for a detailed breakdown of the Pre-Scoping process.

Q. How would the Pre-Scoping process help my project?

A. By taking advantage of the Pre-Scoping process, your project would have a better chance of being designed within budget and on schedule. The deliverables of the Pre-Scoping process include producing a realistic project budget, schedule, and scoping document.

Q. How much does the Pre-Scoping process cost me?

A. The PARA program is funded 100% by ADOT using Federal Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) funds; therefore no local match is required.

Q. How long does the Pre-Scoping process take?

A. Once a project is “kicked off”, it is anticipated that the Pre-Scoping process will take 4-7 weeks to complete. If your project is selected, the ADOT Regional Planner will set up a Kick-Off Meeting sometime after July 1, 2015.

Q. How much staff time will I need to commit?

A. It is anticipated that your agency’s representative would commit 5-15 hours of time over the course of 4-7 weeks, per project. ADOT would expect your representative to attend the Kick-Off Meeting / Field Review and review the Pre-Scoping deliverables: budget, schedule, and scoping document.

Q. Can I combine a Planning Study Application and Pre-Scoping Application into one application (for a total of \$270,000)?

A. No, the Planning Study and Pre-Scoping applications are two separate processes. Planning Studies can be awarded up to \$250,000 and Pre-Scoping projects can be awarded up to \$20,000.

For other questions not listed above, please contact the PARA Program Manager, Dan Gabiou, at DGabiou@azdot.gov or 602-712-7025.